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DEPARTMENT FOR DAS BRYZA AND EUR/CARC

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: ABKHAZIA: UN BASE ESTABLISHED IN UPPER KODORI VALLEY

REF: A. TBILISI 1604

[1](#)B. TBILISI 2043

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES MARK X. PERRY. REASONS:
1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On August 16, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Jean Arnault and the Chief of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) General Khattak provided the Friends of the Secretary General (FSG) an update on the situation in Abkhazia, following the Geneva-style meeting in Bonn (reftel A.) On the Upper Kodori Valley, Khattak said that the UN had now set up a permanent base in the village of Azhara. On the Sigua case, Khattak reported that the first meeting of the Joint Fact Finding Group was August 6 and a follow-on meeting is scheduled for August 21. On the patriotic camp in Ganmukhuri, Khattak relayed continued Abkhaz concerns but said there were no reports of military activities at the camp, which he believed would be closed by October. On resumption of the Quadripartite Meetings (QPM), Arnault said the UN expected a positive response soon from the Georgians to the new format proposed by the UN. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On August 16, UN SRSG Arnault and UNOMIG General Khattak briefed the FSG on the situation in Abkhazia as a follow-up to the Geneva-style meeting in Bonn. German Ambassador Flor, British Ambassador Keefe, French Ambassador Fournier, U.S. Charge Perry and Russian Third Secretary Kurenkov participated on behalf of the Friends.

UPPER KODORI: UN BASE ESTABLISHED, NEED TO SEPARATE FORCES

[1](#)3. (C) Khattak began with a briefing on the situation in the Upper Kodori Valley (UKV). He said the UN had established a team base in the village of Azhara, although it was too newly established to provide an assessment of the security situation. He expressed some concern over the strength of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA) presence in the UKV, which he assessed to be more than the 576 officers declared by the Georgians based on log books maintained by UNOMIG checkpoint 302. He noted a Georgian report of five helicopters observed on the evening of August 5, which the UN is investigating, and the UN report of helicopters seen above UKV on August 11, which he said were the President's escort helicopters scrambled in response to a morning incident in which Russian planes were spotted on the hills above the UKV (in Russian territory) on the same day as the President's visit. The most important issue, Khattak underscored, is creating a line to separate the forces in UKV, as the Moscow Agreement is unclear on this point.

[1](#)4. (C) Khattak reviewed two complaints by the Georgians over checkpoints in Abkhazia. He said Georgia registered a

complaint about CIS Peacekeeping Force (PKF) checkpoint 302, which is on the main access road to the UKV. Following an incident on July 28 involving a near confrontation between the PKF and a senior Georgian official, the Georgians complained that they had not been consulted on the establishment of the checkpoint and that the checkpoint did not have the right to inspect vehicles. Khattak said that the checkpoint had been established in 1995 and had been making inspections since Georgia retook control of the UKV in 2006. He made a case for the importance of this checkpoint as well as two others (307 and 107) for monitoring what goes into the UKV. Khattak said that following a meeting between the head of the PKF and the Georgian Ministry of Defense, the sides agreed that the checkpoint would inspect MIOA vehicles but not civilian traffic.

15. (C) Separately, Khattak said Georgia registered a complaint about CIS PKF checkpoint 107 A, which is on the southern side of the de facto line of demarcation between Upper and Lower Kodori at broken bridge. He said that 107 A was established as an outpost of checkpoint 107 following Georgia's retake of the UKV in July 2006. Following the calming of tensions after the operation, the UN withdrew this position but re-established it on August 6. Khattak characterized the outpost, which has line of sight into the UKV, as an appropriate step by PKF commander Chaban. Khattak also briefed on a planned exercise by the Abkhaz militia August 20-24 which the Abkhaz said would include 6,000 forces. Khattak said the Abkhaz assured the UN that there would be no large exercises and said that UNOMIG had never seen a mobilization of more than 2-3,000 forces. He said UNOMIG would monitor the exercises.

SIGUA: INVESTIGATION STARTED, SO FAR, SO GOOD

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16. (C) Khattak said the Joint Fact Finding Group's first meeting, which he chaired, on the investigation into the disappearance of David Sigua, an ethnic Georgian who worked in the de facto administration, took place on August 6. Mrs. Sigua and another relative were presented as witnesses. He said the JFFG has not been able to establish a motive in the case. He characterized the first meeting as professional and said that the next would take place on August 21 and would examine the alleged escape route and talk to Abkhaz militia who reportedly pursued Sigua's captors.

PATRIOT CAMP: NO EVIDENCE OF MILITARY ACTIVITY

17. (C) Khattak reported continued Abkhaz concerns over the Georgian patriot camp at Ganmukhuri, near the Abkhaz-Georgian ceasefire line. The Abkhaz claim that foreign youth from GUAM countries are participating in the camp, although the UN could not confirm this. He said 250-300 youth are participating in cultural activities and there are no reports of any military activities being conducted in the camp. Khattak assessed that there is a decrease in posturing on both sides over the camp and believed that the camp would be closed by October.

QPMS: GEORGIANS EXPECTED TO RESPOND POSITIVELY TO UN FORMAT

18. (C) On the resumption of the QPMs, Arnault said that the UN is expecting a positive response from the Georgians soon. The issue is with State Minister for Conflict Resolution Bakradze, whom he characterized as a good change because of his closeness to the President and his credibility within the ruling party. German Ambassador Flor said she raised this with Bakradze, who said the issue was now before an inter-ministerial meeting including the MOIA and MOD. He was aware the UN is owed an answer and noted that there are only small issues of concern such as whether the meetings could

alternate between Zugdidi and Gali. British Ambassador Keefe said he heard the same from Bakradze.

CBMS: IMPORTANT POINT OF CONTINUED FOCUS

¶9. (C) Flor urged continued focus on the confidence building measures from the Bonn meeting, including a link with the Turkish diaspora, the opening of the port, and the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs.) Arnault responded that the Georgian approach to the IDP issue has been ideological, demanding a return to all of Abkhazia without preconditions. He said a more measured, slower approach set out in a 2001 declaration supporting a return to Gali in the first instance has been abandoned by the Georgian side. He argued for the Georgians to adopt a practical solution and suggested one way for the Friends to help would be to ask the Georgians to come up with a realistic IDP strategy.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) This meeting, which included Arnault, was a much more positive assessment of the situation than the one led by his deputy, Ivo Petrov, just two weeks before (reftel B). Still, Khattak -- and by extension the UN's -- focus on the intricacies of checkpoints is at the heart of the complaints by the Georgians. This issue is important and we will urge them to respond quickly and positively to the proposed format for the resumption of the QPMs, but at the same time, we need to press the UN to raise its sights to focus on the more strategic aspects of conflict resolution, including the return of IDPs and movement toward a political solution that resolves the conflict within Georgia. We believe that absent some movement on the strategic front, it will become harder and harder to get Georgia to agree to confidence building measures as Georgia moves closer to Presidential and Parliamentary elections in 2008. End comment.

PERRY